

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

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1. A network system comprising a plurality of individual service providers each having access points, and a parallel service provider connected to the plurality of individual service providers and including an authentication server,

wherein when the access point of the individual service providers receives a connection request from a user who contracts with the parallel service provider, the providers cause the authentication server to perform user authentication and connect the user to a network through the access point in accordance with a result of the authentication.

2. The network system according to claim 1, wherein the user who contracts with the parallel service provider sends a connection request containing a domain name of the parallel service provider to the access point, and the access point determines whether the user contracts with the parallel service provider in accordance with presence or absence of the domain name.

3. The network system according to claim 1, wherein the parallel service provider is connected to the plurality of individual service providers through an exclusive line.

4. The network system according to claim 1, wherein the plurality of individual service providers

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sending a connection request from a user to an

5     access point of any one of a plurality of individual  
service providers;

determining by the access point whether the user is a member of an individual service provider including the access point or a member of a parallel service provider that contracts with the plurality of individual service providers;

executing user authentication processing by the  
access point itself when the user is a member of the  
individual service provider, and connecting the user  
15 to a network in accordance with a result of the  
authentication processing; and

causing the parallel service provider to execute user authentication processing when the user is a member of the parallel service provider, and connecting the user to the network in accordance with a result of the authentication processing.

25 6. The network connecting method according to claim 5, wherein the user who contracts with the parallel service provider sends a connection request containing a domain name of the parallel service provider to the access point, and the access point determines whether the user contracts with the parallel

7. The network connecting method according to claim 5, wherein the plurality of individual service providers send respective user connection recordings to the parallel service provider.

means for, when a user name is input, determining  
10 whether an electronic mail address including a  
combination of the user name and any one of a plurality  
of predetermined sub-domains has been registered; and

9. A network connection device comprising:  
means for, when a connection request is issued  
from a user, determining whether the user is a regular  
member of a provider with which the user contracts or  
a partnership member under a given contract with the  
provider;

means for, when the user is a regular member, executing user authentication processing and connecting the user to a network in accordance with a result of

means for, when the user is a partnership member, transferring a connection request to a specified authentication server, and executing user authentication processing and connecting the user to the network in accordance with a result of the authentication processing.

11. The network connection device according to claim 9, wherein the specified authentication server is connected to network connection devices of a plurality of companies and used in common.